

What next for climate change?

The COP 15 United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen saw two bitter and stumbling weeks of talks with numerous battles of will between developed and developing nations. The Bond Development and Environment Group (DEG) reflect on the outcome of the meeting and what happens next.

In the first week, there was a dash for the 194 nations involved to get as far as possible on the many negotiating sub-tracks, such as adaptation, reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) and technology with the hope that they could provide some substantive outcome. In week two things fell apart. Ministers who could have helped to complete earlier work instead focused on a political declaration ahead of heads of state arriving. The political deal was finally stitched up on the last day by President Obama with China, India, South Africa and Brazil. The result was the Copenhagen Accord.

The Copenhagen Accord

The Copenhagen Accord mostly reiterates bits of other agreements and lists previously mentioned numbers. On the positive side, it does include staying below two degrees Celsius, commitment by developed countries for short term finance (2010-2012) approaching \$30 billion, and sets a long-term goal of mobilising \$100 billion per year by 2020 for adaptation and mitigation in developing countries. Under the Accord, countries are invited to write their domestic emission reduction targets into an Annex (known as pledge and review), but most NGOs are disappointed with this – it is a weak outcome that does not contain legally binding scientific emissions cuts that would help ensure global temperature rise is kept below two degrees Celsius. Ultimately, it does not reflect the interests of the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

It is also not clear what the legal status of the Accord is, or who signed up to it – several countries including Tuvalu, Sudan and Bolivia clearly did not. Countries wishing to support it are meant to do so by the end of January 2010. While the Accord is being used as the way forward, with developed countries and the United Nations actively pursuing new signatory countries, it raises many questions and concerns about the United Nations process.

NGO action in Copenhagen

There was a strong and visible presence of civil society in Copenhagen. In addition to the (very peaceful) 100,000 people march through the centre of Copenhagen, civil society had a active role within the conference centre. What stood out was the presence of Southern civil society who played a clear role in strengthening the position of developing countries. The NGOs' legitimate position there, however, was compromised by a decision to strictly limit the numbers of civil society who could access the conference in the last few days when the ministers and Heads of State were meeting.

Where next in 2010?

Everyone involved is now analysing the process and outcomes so far, deciding where to place effort and resources this year. The Bond DEG Climate Group has begun meetings to share thoughts and ideas for 2010.

The need for a climate deal is more urgent than ever – the ideal outcome would be a fair, ambitious and binding deal that is science based. However, there is increasing realisation that the “binding” bit is currently politically intractable, and could lock the world into bad or perverse outcomes.

DEG is likely to focus on the fair and ambitious element, including:

- The role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and what can usefully be achieved this year (particularly on REDD, adaptation and technology)
- Delivery of national domestic pledges from rich countries and the emerging economies, and ensuring that all domestic commitments add up to a global total which keeps the world below two degrees Celsius of global warming



- Addressing vested interests that have been actively blocking climate change ambition at national and global levels, including from the corporate sector
- Finance to developing countries for adaptation and mitigation, both fast track and long term

More generally, we need to continue to mobilise the public to keep the voice for action on climate change strong throughout 2010. It will be essential to raise climate change as a General Election issue this spring, and to secure on-going government prioritisation of climate change action throughout the year.

Copenhagen was not the end of our climate change work; it was the start of a new effort to raise ambition and renew the call for a fair, ambitious, science-based deal for all. Without it, development efforts will be thwarted and ultimately life on earth challenged.

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For more information on the work of the group, or to join, go to the Bond website and log into the members' area (Bond members only). Once logged in, click on Groups Home and select the group: www.bond.org.uk



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